



April 2012

Case Study

**The City of London Cemetery
Manor Park,
London E12**

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Introduction

Death is one of the great certainties of life and mankind has evolved many rituals and practices in response to it. The funeral and internment are a central part of this rite, providing an opportunity to remember and celebrate the life of the departed. For the living, the dead can also be a powerful presence, which by prayer or petition can intercede, for better or worse, in their daily lives or those of others.

Early Roman custom tended to cremation and as Christianity developed, influenced by its Jewish origins, burials in graveyards and tombs became a distinguishing cultural feature. Burial rather than cremation is the Muslim custom and funeral architecture in the form of tombs and mausoleums, varies within the sects in Islam. On his death Muhammad asked for an unmarked grave in a chamber of his house ¹. In Africa amongst the Ga tribe in Ghana elaborate funerals take place with colourful coffins representing the characters and trades of the deceased (Fig 1: Ga Coffin Ghana)



Figure 1:Ga Coffin Ghana

¹ Fairchild Ruggles.D. Islamic Gardens and Landscapes. Pge 103

The City of London Cemetery is one of the largest in Europe and is a Grade 1 Listed Landscape. The two hundred acre site was purchased in 1853 in response to overflowing and unsanitary graveyards in the City. It shows, from its inception to the present day, in clear and fascinating detail the culture of funerals, internment and bereavement. The layout, the churches, crematoria and mausoleums, tombs and gravestones provide an evolving cultural record commencing from the foundation of the cemetery through to the present day.

This case study will show the location, general history and influences on the design of the cemetery, the developments in the original layout, management structures and issues and changing attitudes to burial.

Location

The City of London Cemetery is in east London in suburbs approximately half a mile from the North Circular road. Public transport is available by Tube from East Ham, the Overground from Woodgrange Park and British Rail from Manor Park and Ilford. A number of local bus routes stop near or by the main entrance. There are two gated entrances into the Cemetery. The main gate is near the junction of Forest Drive and Alderbrooks Road. The smaller south gate is accessed from Rabbits Road.

The map below shows the location of the cemetery on the eastern side of the City of London (Fig 2:Location of the City of London Cemetery). The next plan shows the internal layout of the cemetery (Fig 3:Plan of the City of London Cemetery)

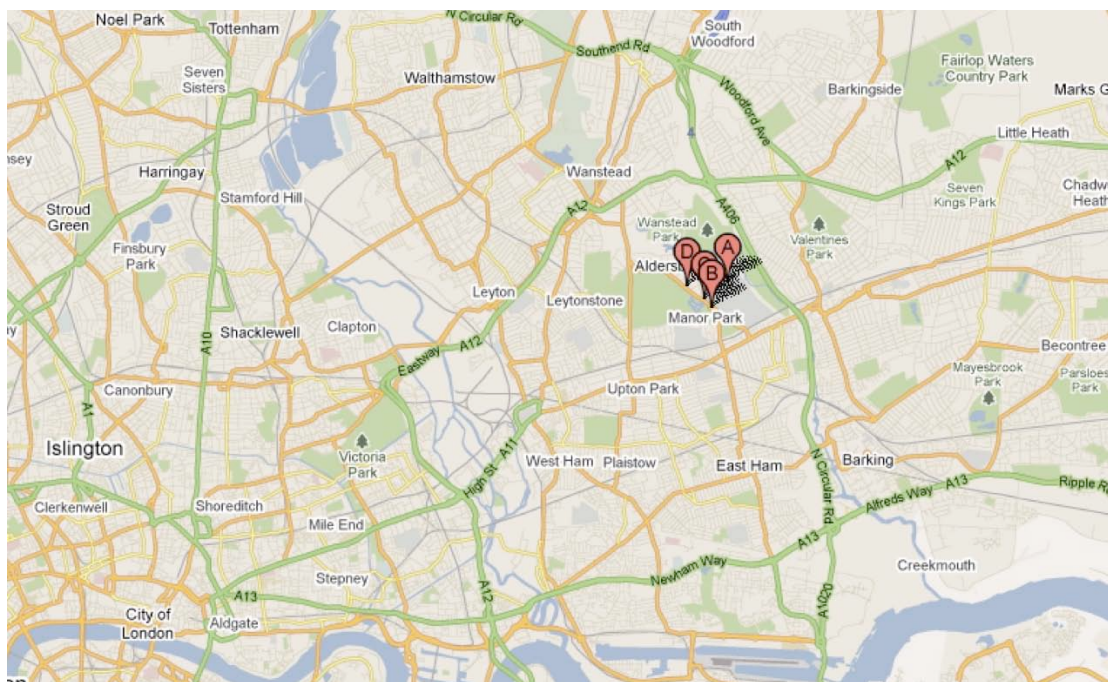


Figure 2:Location of City of London Cemetery

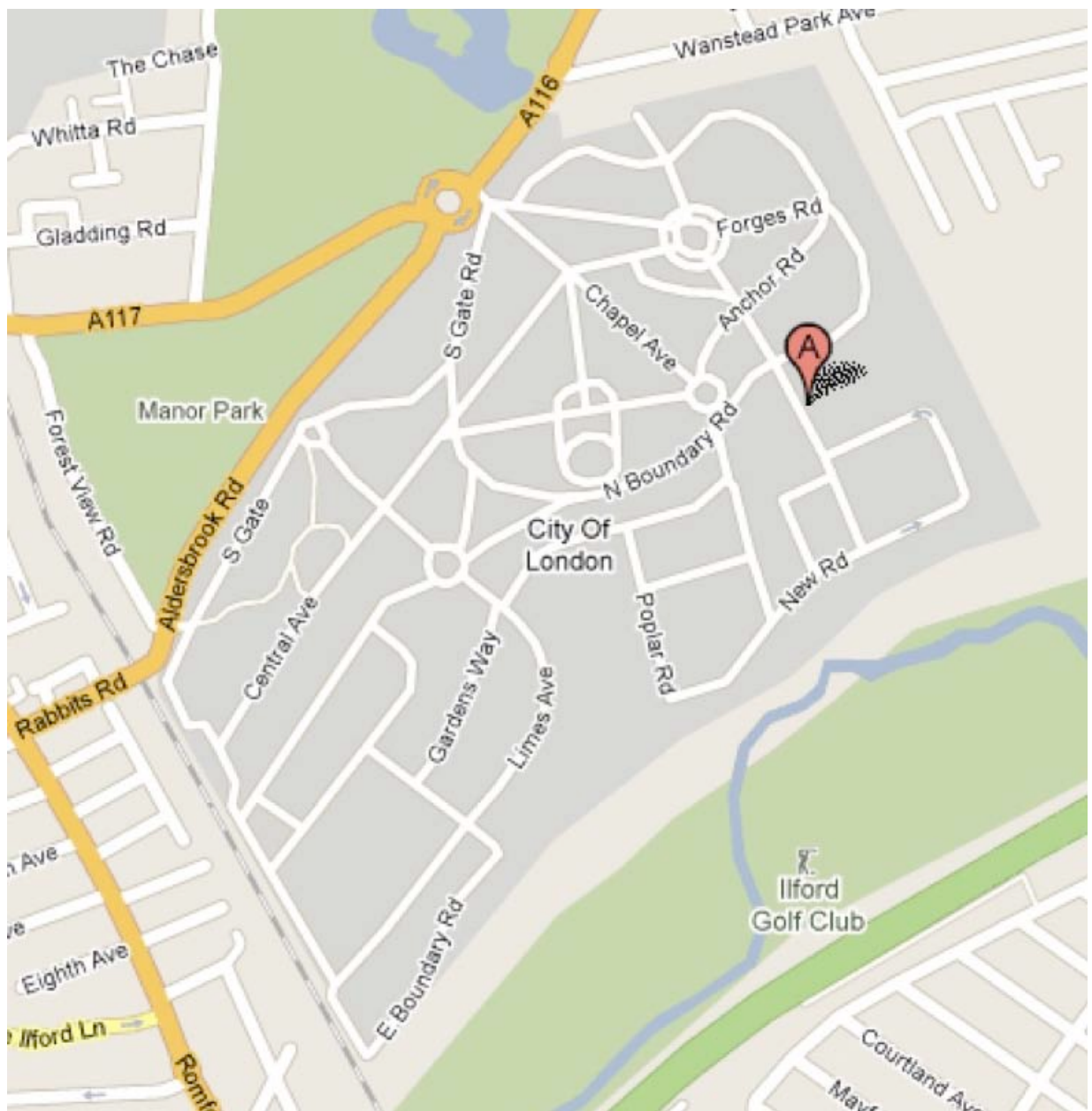


Figure 3: Plan of the City of London Cemetery

HISTORY

The City of London Cemetery was established in 1853 on land purchased from Lord Wellesley. Geographically it lies on the southern edge of Epping Forest in an area known as The Flats. Prior to this it was farm and parkland centered on the Manor of Aldersbrook (Fig 4: Excavation plan of Aldersbrook Manor and Farm).

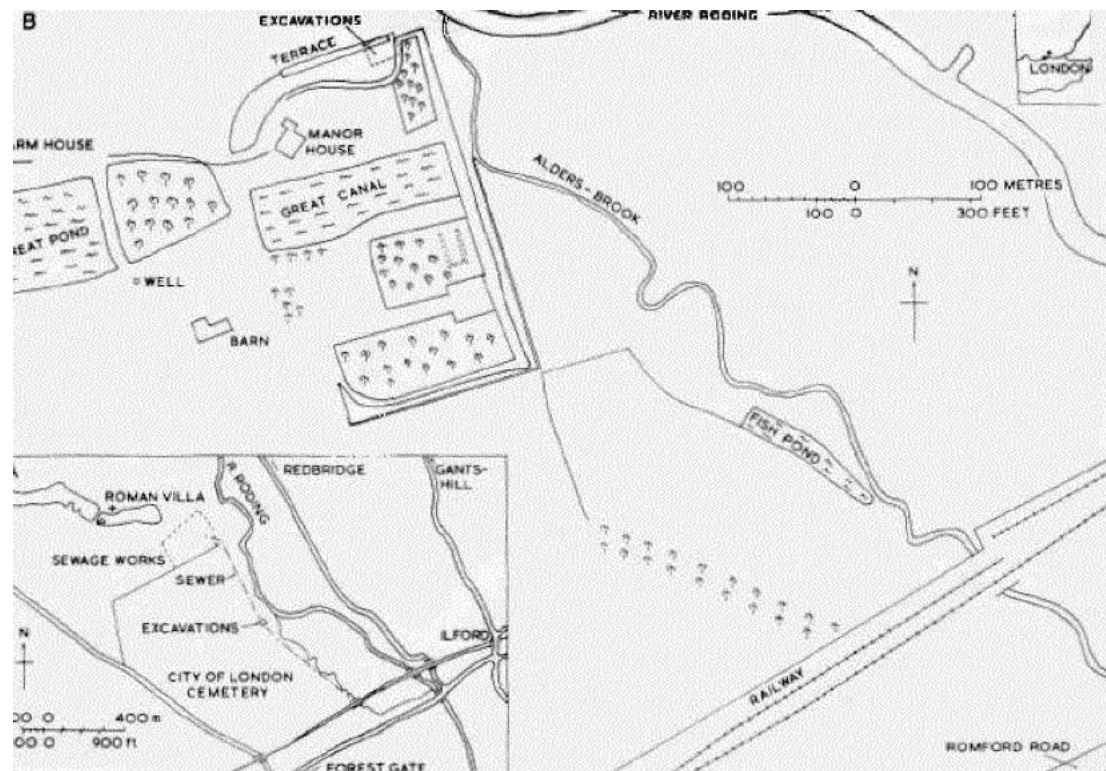


Figure 4:Excavation plan of Aldersbrook Manor and Farm

In the medieval period it was owned by Sir John Heron, treasurer of the chamber to Henry the VII and VIII, whose son, married to Sir Thomas Moore's daughter, inherited the estate. Later in the century, the Earl of Pembroke owned the property. The owners signify that at this point in the site's history it was a substantial holding with house and grounds to match their position in society. After a period of decline members of the Lethieulliers family bought the estate and began to improve it. During their ownership they created a Rococo period garden with a wood, lawn, mount, parterre and hermitage².

² Lambert.D. The Cemetery in a Garden Pge 13

However, it did not survive long and by the end of the eighteenth century the house and garden had been dismantled, with ownership passing eventually to the Earl of Mornington and his son Lord Wellesley. At the time it was purchased by the City of London Corporation, for use as a cemetery, it was a prosperous tenant farm.

Graveyards were already described as full in the 1660's and by the mid nineteenth century the situation in the City of London was dire. Shallow graves were reused within six months of the last burial with visible decaying remains and a foul stench. Finally two serious cholera epidemics in London in the early nineteenth century lead to widespread demands for sufficient and sanitary places for burial.

Dr John Simon was appointed the City of London Medical Officer in 1848 and urged, so dire was the public health hazard, that all the City's burial places be closed. This and the 1852 Burial Act, which gave the City statutory responsibilities pushed the City into acting. From the onset the site was to be available to both Anglican & Dissenter, wealthy and poor. The Surveyor for the City of London, William Heywood, was asked to complete a report to find a suitable site. Heywood had a background in public service, working first as Surveyor for the City, then Surveyor and Engineer.

Heywood's report in 1853 was brutally honest referring to "over gorged" graveyards with "disgusting conditions"³. The site had to be within reasonable travelling distance of the City of London and able to provide approximately 3000 burial places a year and be capable of expanding. William Heywood recommended the site owned by Lord Wellesly at Aldersbrook in East London. The tenant farm was two hundred acres of undulating well drained land that in Heywood's own words offered "a fine bright gravel, varying in depths from 10 feet to 18 feet"⁴

³ Lambert.D. The Cemetery in a Garden Pge 13

⁴ Lambert.D. The Cemetery in a Garden Pge 13

The City was slow in recognizing the need for a cemetery when compared to other public and private bodies. By the time Heywood had prepared his report, a considerable number of other cemeteries were already established or in the process of being commissioned. The first was in northwest London at Kensal Green in 1837, followed by Norwood Cemetery in 1837 and the Highgate Cemetery in 1839. There were others but they all catered for the affording classes with little provision for the poorer citizens of London.

John Claudius Loudon had published an influential book in 1843 titled “On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries, and on the improvement of Churchyards”. This was ten years before the establishment of the City of London Cemetery. It was a practical book inspired by harrowing sights witnessed by Loudon in Poland in 1813 after the Battle of Bautzen. As he notes in the Preface “The strong impression made by these scenes has induced us ever since to pay particular attention to cemeteries and churchyards where ever we have been, either abroad or at home; and we have since seen all the more remarkable cemeteries on the Continent, from Stockholm to Naples, and all the large new cemeteries in Britain.”⁵. It is an eloquent and compassionate book, encompassing a large number of issues on cemetery layout and management, ranging from the sealing of a catacomb to the dignified burial of paupers.

Loudon also designed cemeteries in Bath (Abbey Cemetery opened in 1844. Grade II English Heritage) and Cambridge (Histon Road Cemetery established 1843. Grade II English Heritage).

The plan, as envisaged by Heywood, was to develop 95 acres and reserve the rest of the land for future development. Work proceeded quickly with the lake drained, existing buildings removed and drainage installed within a year

⁵ Loudon J.C. On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries, and on the improvement of Churchyards. Loudon JC 1843. General Books Pge 3.

and a half of the purchase. A chapel each for the Anglican and the Dissenters was erected along with the construction of the Catacombs at the eastern end of the former lake. William Davidson was commissioned to develop the planting whilst Heywood concentrated on the layout and architectural features including the chapels, entrance and lodges. He used a Gothic revival style rather than the prevailing neo-classical style found in earlier cemeteries such as Kensal Green and Highgate. An efficient circulation route was of the utmost importance in order for the cemetery to cope with elaborate funeral corteges. By the early 1870's the cemetery was handling over 10,000 funerals a year.

The layout was ambitious, incorporating serpentine routes and axes focused on architectural features. The original undulating land mentioned by Heywood in his report to the Commissioners in 1853 was developed, with roads following original or constructed changes in levels that would allow features to be hidden and revealed as the design required. The visitor upon entering the main entrance with its impressive gated portico was greeted by shrubberies and annual flower displays that created a garden like environment from the onset. This mood was further developed as the visitor travelled through the sylvan parkland of deciduous flowering trees and shrubs. This was a deliberate design to uplift rather than lower spirits, to improve the mood and provide a sense of repose and contemplation. These principles were enshrined in the ideals of Loudon in his book, "A secondary object is, or ought to be, the improvement of the moral sentiments and general taste of all the classes, and more especially of the great masses of Society"⁶

Views of the two chapels were so constructed that once en route to either one the view of the other would be hidden. An important part of the design was the Catacomb Valley created on the site of the former lake. The drained lake bed, itself a testament to the quality of Victorian engineering, created a natural oval

⁶ Loudon J.C. On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries, and on the improvement of Churchyards. Loudon JC 1843. General Books Pge 10.

that ended in the construction of a raised terrace with a balustrade under which the Catacombs lay. The Catacombs were never popular as a place of remembrance and fell into disuse after the mid 1850's. The planting of the area and the views enjoyed from the terrace however were popular and designed to provide a place to enjoy the prospects and the planting.

The consecration of the cemetery was delayed by the then Bishop of London due to financial concerns about the loss of income for burials in the City's parish churchyards. He insisted that agreement had to be reached with all 106 Parishes and not some. Forty nine acres were eventually consecrated in 1857 for Anglicans and twenty one acres for Dissenters with a further twenty acres unassigned. The aptly named Divisional Road marks part of the boundary between the consecrated and unconsecrated ground along with cast iron marker posts.

The planting gave the cemetery a special character. Initially, traditional groupings of evergreens were avoided by William Davidson, the nurseryman engaged by Heywood. He concentrated on deciduous flowering trees and shrubs thus giving it a distinctive character that set it apart from other cemetery planting. He was a former head gardener at Shrubland Park in Suffolk with specialist knowledge in ornamental gardening. The annual bedding scheme that greeted visitors at the main entrance used colourful and cheery combinations of red and pink Geraniums, Begonias and Heliotropes. Wider and deeper borders of Rhododendrons and Hydrangeas for additional effect were interspersed throughout the cemetery. Davidson's tree planting included London Plane, Lime, Cherry, Beech and Horse Chestnut.

The success of the cemetery can be seen in the use to which it was subsequently put. Over eleven thousand bodies, disinterred from City graveyards, were reburied in the cemetery and in 1861 there were 8,104 new

burials alone⁷. A considerable number of graves from demolished churches were reinterred in the cemetery. The Union of Benefices Act of 1860 enabled the Anglican Church to manage declining numbers of parishioners with the result that some churches were amalgamated and demolished, a controversial move, even now⁸. Monuments to these demolished churches, such as the one for All Hallows Bread Street, form an important part of the architecture of the cemetery. In other cases infrastructure improvements in the City necessitated the removal of Churches such as of St Andrews and St Sepulchre's Holborn when the Holborn Viaduct was constructed. A substantial Gothic style monument for those buried in the former churchyard was then erected in the Cemetery.

The provision of pauper graves, whether mass reinterments or individual graves, had to be provided by the cemetery with ninety per cent of the burials in the nineteenth century, for paupers alone.⁹. Mass graves from City plague pits, the Royal Orphanage and Newgate Prison were also reinterred at the cemetery.

The issue of expansion was of crucial importance to the cemetery. At the end of the nineteenth century some of the reserved land was used and extensions made to the facilities such as a walled garden, ladies waiting room by the entrance and bathroom for the superintendent's house.

In the early twentieth century, there was a cultural shift in attitudes to burial and internment, specifically a rise in the practice of cremation. It was in part a response to the issue of space caused by the lack of legal provision to reuse graves. It was also a secular response to the elaborate high church funeral and burial rituals of the Victorian and Edwardian era. Controversial at first, it slowly gained popularity. In hindsight, it was a development in keeping with

⁷ Lambert.D. The Cemetery in a Garden Pge 31

⁸ ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue. See Bibliography Templeman Report

⁹ Lambert.D. The Cemetery in a Garden Pge 33

Loudon's principles. He was no lover of funeral tradition and advocated temporary cemeteries, woodland burial and a general reduction in forms of ritual and the expense associated with it ¹⁰

In 1904, following the legalization of cremation under an Act of Parliament in 1902, the Commissioners built a Gothic style Crematorium with the first cremation on the 18th of March 1905 ¹¹. As it became popular, new forms of remembrance were developed. Following cremation the deceased's ashes could be spread in the cemetery with an inscription on a plaque. The plaque could be placed by a tree, shrub or rose or within a dedicated space in the columbaria. These proposals evolved on a piecemeal basis before the Second World War commencing with the concept of a rockery Garden of Rest near the Limes Avenue in 1928. This was followed by a more grandiose scheme, only partially adopted, that involved the use of the columbarium for urns with a Garden of Remembrance in front. The Garden was not built but the columbarium was adopted for the use of urns.

In 1953 the Corporation commissioned Landscape Architect, Richard Sudell, to design a Memorial Garden. He was a founding member of the Landscape Institute, formerly the British Association of Garden Architects. A believer in the intent and scale of the average domestic garden he designed with these principles at the cemetery. He used trees and shrubs scaled to a garden space, modern materials in the form of coloured concrete within small enclosures. With its use of perennials it was relatively high maintenance and in contrast with the park like atmosphere Heywood had established. The Memorial Garden was extended in the 1960's and the 1970's.

At the same time the Corporation had a radical rethink on its grave burial policy following the changed social and economic environment of the two World Wars. The new minimal aesthetic and egalitarian spirit of the mid

¹⁰ Loudon J.C. On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries, and on the improvement of Churchyards. Loudon JC 1843. General Books Pge 61

¹¹ www.eolfhs.org.uk/cemeteries/city

twentieth century favoured the adoption of Lawn graves, (Fig 5: Lawn Graves at the City of London Cemetery) with a simple headstone, without kerbing, laid out in formal rows.



Figure 5: Lawn Graves at City of London Cemetery

The design was influenced by the serried ranks of simple crosses used in the war cemeteries of the two World Wars. The contemporary layout enabled a better use of limited space at less material cost and maintenance. All of these factors better suited England's post war economy and incomes.

Management

The cemetery is presently owned and run by The City of London Corporation on a not for profit basis. Anyone can be buried at the cemetery whatever their religious beliefs and without a direct connection to the City of London. The monument to Lord Shiva (Fig 6: Monument to Lord Shiva at the City of London Cemetery) erected by the Hindu community bears testament to this.



Figure 6: Monument to Lord Shiva at the City of London Cemetery

However, the overwhelming majority of interments are either Christian or Atheist. It provides over 2500 cremations a year and 360 new burials a year. Old memorials are reused when sited on unconsecrated ground. Consecrated ground requires the permission from the Ministry of Justice, a complicated and slow process and likely to remain so until new laws are enacted.

Sixty seven full time staff are employed at the cemetery with thirty seven staff working on all aspects of maintenance, twelve of which are ground maintenance staff.

The cemetery provides a number of services that are detailed in the leaflet titled 'Cemetery & Crematorium : Scale of Charges' which sets out the types and charges for each service provided. This includes body burial in a private or public grave, cremation followed by burial of the ashes in a grave or by scattering in the Garden of Rest. The Memorial Garden or the Columbarium can be used for remembrance with a dedicatory plaque placed in an outdoor niche or indoor niche in the case of the Columbarium. Use of the grounds is based a system of prepaid leases ranging from twenty years to a maximum of one hundred years. Other services offered, include the maintenance of tombs and grounds, genealogical searches and a Book of Remembrance. Services can be taken in either one of the two chapels or at the Crematorium.

In 2002, the City of London Corporation commissioned a Conservation Management Plan (hereafter referred to as the C.M.P) written by David Lambert, Head of the National Parks Agency with contributions by others. This extensive document, completed in 2004, examined the history and development of the site and provided a series of policies for the future management of the site. Subsequently, policy guidelines were established that resulted in a clearer aims and management structure. This included establishing a panel to evaluate the older memorials based on historical and ecological criteria. Once the review process is completed, a recommendation can be made whether to repair, demolish or reuse the tombs. Another initiative has made use of the conservation management team of the City of London, resulting in an ongoing program of repair on the monuments. The ecology of the site has been evaluated with a specific management regime that places it within the wider context of the ecology of Epping Forest and Wanstead Flats. The original Heywood landscape is being rejuvenated

(Fig 7:Rejuvenated Shrub Pruning at the City of London Cemetery) with new planting and maintenance regimes.



Figure 7: Rejuvenated shrub pruning at the City of London Cemetery

The historic maintenance budget for the cemetery is approximately £800,000 per annum. The cemetery is responsible for the upkeep of all the memorials, tombs and hard landscape features except where families own leases on particular tombs or urns. The management work with English Heritage and other statutory authorities when undertaking restoration work. As part of the ongoing conservation works on the site the Anglican Chapel has recently been restored. This work is completed within guidelines established by the C.M.P.

Core soft landscape maintenance on the site is centered on arboriculture, grass and borders. Each aspect of maintenance raises particular issues. Tree planting is a continuous process with particular care required when setting

new trees by architectural features. Inevitably, some of the established trees have outgrown their situation resulting in damage to tombs (Fig 8:Tree growing by tomb at City of London Cemetery).

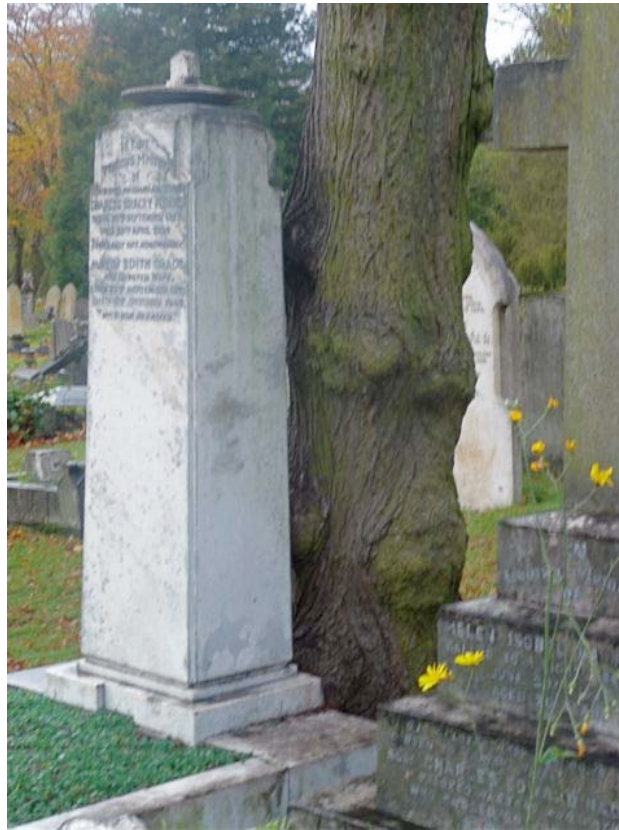


Figure 8:Tree growing by tomb at City of London Cemetery

The bleeding canker that affects Horse Chestnuts (*Pseudomonas syringae* var. *aesculi*) is a serious problem at the cemetery and replacement planting is being considered. Regular arboricultural work is undertaken to maintain the health of the trees including visual assessment (health and safety), summer dead wooding, crown raising, limb support and felling. A number of tree trails taking in a variety of routes and species have been established both for education and enjoyment.

Grass maintenance is labour intensive and has to be combined with ecological aims. Over-personalised lawn graves hamper mowing regimes, whilst over zealous grass cutting affects species types and distribution. As

Paul Ferris the author of a report on the Flora of the Cemetery notes “Perhaps a regime of maintenance might be developed in the future that takes botanical needs more into account. In the older and more remote parts of the cemetery there must be areas where grass could be cut perhaps two times a year - in June after the spring flowering and again in autumn. This would allow flowers to seed and to recover. Though certainly some people visiting might wonder at the "untidiness" of such areas, as many would enjoy the spectacle of wildflowers flourishing”.¹² Striking a balance between ‘tidiness’ and encouraging the ecology of the site is not easy and it is difficult to satisfy all parties. In the main the cemetery manages to achieve this.

The Green Flag and Heritage Scheme have both have been awarded to the cemetery and play an important part in maintaining standards. Sponsored by English Heritage it is a vital tool in maintaining standards on sites with heritage status and funding. These schemes provide a useful function in monitoring standards of conservation and maintenance.

The management of the cemetery is also viewed in a wider context that includes Epping Forest and Wanstead Flats. It is also part of a “green corridor” connecting public and private green spaces in east London. The cemetery lies within the Green Grid planning initiative. The River Roding on the eastern boundary of the cemetery is important and used by the public. Linda Kelly, Director of Groundwork London noted “The recently reconstructed pathway out of Wanstead Park alongside the City of London Cemetery, is frustratingly distant from the river”¹³ Although the cemetery is not directly responsible for the layout of the pathway, comments like these are indicative of the wider consultative and planning context and part of the broader remit identified in the 2004 C.M.P

¹² www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk

¹³ www.designforlondon.gov.uk. See Bibliograph

Heritage & Education

The cemetery has an outstanding cultural record that has been used both in the heritage trail and educational programs. The heritage trail and brochure provides an informative record of the history of the cemetery and those buried in it. Notable monuments include the Vigilant Monument, the Piano Lady and the graves of two of the policemen who died in the Houndsditch Murders. A recent article in The Independent (ref: Under Siege:The Independent Magazine 11th December:Pge 31) analysing the event and its impact on British policing, politics and media show how memorials at the Cemetery link the past with the present. To commemorate the event, the City of London Police will be laying a wreath at each at the tombs of the fallen policemen and the Museum of London will be opening an exhibition covering the events and its 'spectacular' aftermath.

Paul Ferris has authored on behalf of the Wanstead Wildlife Society a number of reports that covers the Flora and Fauna of the cemetery. These have are available either as pdf downloads or in booklet form from the Society ¹⁴

¹⁴ www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk

Design Developments

Kim Wilkie Associates has proposed a contemporary design for area by the rubbish tip (The Shoot). The inspiration for the design derives from the Ancient British Long Barrow. From a plan view, it has an organic quality reminiscent of a series of receding waves (Figure 9:Kim Wilkie Associates design proposal for City of London Cemetery). It does not provide for grave burial but uses columbaria, catacombs and crypts for the deceased. It is strikingly different to the existing layout and uses the last remaining available site within the grounds of the cemetery. A final decision has yet to be made to implement the design.



Figure 9:Kim Wilkie Associates design proposal for City of London Cemetery

Conclusion

William Heywood designed the original layout of the cemetery with the planting supervised by William Davidson. The designs and writings of Loudon were an important influence on Heywood. However, over the years the design, construction and planting have continued to develop as the cemetery has expanded. All of the original land purchased was utilized by the 1970's.

Inevitably the original layout has been compromised, affecting sight lines and the atmosphere of the original park as conceived by Heywood. These issues are addressed by the C.M.P, but there is an uneasy relationship between the original design and subsequent additions to the cemetery that are not so easily remedied e.g. the new crematorium built in the 1970's badly impairs on the sight line to the Catacomb. Now, any new developments would have to respond to a robust set of historical criteria and planning legislation absent in previous decades.



Figure 10: Flowers by Lawn Graves at City of London Cemetery

Taste is both subjective and personal. The quality of the statues within the children's garden could be discussed as could the lively, personal and at times gaudy flower relics planted beside some of the Lawn graves (Fig 10: Flowers by Lawn Graves at City of London Cemetery). In part the challenge for the cemetery management is to balance the personal aesthetic within the sober aesthetic of the existing layout and the aims and objectives of the C.M.P.

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